

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 08046 040311Z

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ACTION SS-25

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 8046

EXDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PINS, KS

SUBJECT: KOREAN INTERNAL SITUATION

1. SUMMARY - PRIMIN KIM CHONG PIL, DURING MEETING WITH ME
DECEMBER 3, DESCRIBED KOREAN INTERNAL POLITICAL
SITUATION AS QUIET WITH ANTICIPATION THAT IT WOULD
REMAIN SO FOR SOMETIME. PRESIDENT PARK INTENDS TO BE
MUCH MORE LENIENT, AND TOLERANT OF DISSENT UNLESS
THERE ARE UNANTICIPATED MASS DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST
HIS GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY

2. PRIMIN RAISED INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION FOLLOWING
DISCUSSION OF MILITARY WEAPONS PROBLEMS REPORTED SEPTEL.
HE SAID THAT AT PRESENT GOVERNMENT CONSIDERS INTERNAL
SITUATION QUIET AND EXPECTS IT WILL REAMIN SO FOR
SOME TIME AT LEAST. HE EMPHASIZED AT SEVERAL POINTS
PRESIDENT PARK'S INTENTION TO TAKE A "MUCH MORE
LENIENT" POSITION TOWARD DISSENT NOW AND IN THE FUTURE
UNLESS THERE ARE MAJOR NEW UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENTS. HE
EXPECTS THAT BY THE END OF THIS YEAR OR FIRST PART OF
NEXT YEAR PRESIDENT PARK WILL BE LENIENT TOWARD THOSE
NOW HELD IN JAIL FOR POLITICAL OFFENSES, PARTICULARLY
IF THEY REPENT THEIR MISDEEDS. HIS OWN SPEECH TO
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PAGE 02 SEOUL 08046 040311Z

GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION NATIONAL ASSEMBLYMEN HAD BEEN

BASED UPON PRESIDENT'S DESIRE TO EXERCISE LENIENCY AND WAS DESIGNED TO CREATE THE NECESSARY ENVIRONMENT FOR SUCH LENIENCY.

3. PRIMIN THEN DESCRIBED THE CURRENT SITUATION IN VARIOUS

SECTORS OF POLITICAL DISSENT. IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, ROKG HAD ACTED TO PASS THE BUDGET ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1 EVEN THOUGH THE OPPOSITION HAD ANNOUNCED IT WAS COMING BACK TO THE ASSEMBLY WHEN THEY FOUND OUT THAT THE NDP PLANNED TO BLOCK BUDGET PASSAGE THE FOLLOWING DAY. NDP PLAN WAS TO CAUCUS AT TEN A.M., DECEMBER 2, AND THEN STAGE SIT-IN STRIKE ON ASSEMBLY FLOOR BLOCKING BUDGET PASSAGE UNTIL GOVERNMENT AGREED TO FIVE-DAY INTERPOLATION. CONSEQUENCE OF NDP ACTION WOULD HAVE BEEN TO PREVENT BUDGET PASSAGE BEYOND LEGAL DEADLINE OF DECEMBER 2.

4. PRESENT PLAN IS TO RECESS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY UNTIL DECEMBER TEN TO PROVIDE COOLING-OFF PERIOD AND FOR NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN NDP AND DRP. SESSION WOULD THEN RESUME AND END ON SCHEDULE DECEMBER 18. PRIMIN DOES NOT EXPECT COMPROMISE WILL BE FEASIBLE ON CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ISSUE SINCE NDP WILL NOT WITHDRAW FROM ITS DEMAND THAT ANY ASSEMBLY REVIEW OF CONSTITUTION BE SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED TO DEVELOP AMENDMENTS TO IT. PRIMIN ALSO COMMENTED THAT INTERNAL DIFFERENCES HAVE ARISEN IN NDP CAUCUS. KIM YONG SAM'S HARD LINE POLICY HAS BEEN INCREASINGLY CRITICIZED FOR NOT HAVING ACHIEVED ANYTHING.

5. WITH RESPECT TO UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES, MANY ARE NOW GOING BACK INTO SESSION. GOVERNMENT DOES NOT HAVE ANY SERIOUS INDICATION OF MAJOR FLARE-UP IN UNIVERSITIES LEADING TO LARGE-SCALE TURMOIL. IT ANTICIPATES CONTINUED MINOR DISTURBANCES, LEAFLETS, ETC. AND WILL BE LENIENT AS LONG AS THERE IS NO MAJOR TURMOIL.

6. PRIMIN SAID THAT RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES CONTINUE ALSO TO BE CHARACTERIZED BY MODERATED DISSENT, BUT NO MAJOR ACTIONS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT ARE ANTICIPATED
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PAGE 03 SEOUL 08046 040311Z

FROM THESE GROUPS. IN FACT, NCC HAS BEEN SO EXTREME THAT OTHER RELIGIOUS GROUPS, KCC AND DCC, HAVE CRITICIZED THEM FOR RESORTING TO THESE EXTREME ACTIONS AND GOING BEYOND NORMAL RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES. HE ANTICIPATES THAT MORE EXTREME DISSENTERS WITHIN RELIGIOUS CIRCLES WILL BE CHECKED BY OTHER RELIGIOUS GROUPS.

7. PRIMIN COMMENTED THAT, WITH RESPECT TO THE GOVERN-

MENT, IT HAS ADOPTED DELIBERATE POLICY OF TAKING EVERY PRECAUTION NOT TO INCITE FURTHER PROBLEMS, BUT TO ENCOURAGE A CALM, COOL ENVIRONMENT. AS EXAMPLES OF GOVERNMENT RESTRAINT, HE CITED PROBABLE DECISION NOT TO HOLD ANNUAL MEETING OF NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR UNIFICATION, WHICH COULD AGGRAVATE SITUATION. ADDITIONALLY, DRP AND YUJONG-HOE HAVE BEEN TOLD NOT TO ORGANIZE LOCAL COMMITTEES TO COUNTERACT NDP LOCAL CHAPTERS BEING ORGANIZED TO FIGHT FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT, SINCE THIS WOULD ALSO AGGRAVATE SITUATION. NEITHER THE GOVERNMENT NOR THE DRP PLANS TO TAKE A LEADING ROLE IN DEFENDING YUSHIN CONSTITUTION. DEFENSE WILL BE LEFT TO SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING THE CONSTITUTION.

8. I TOOK OPPORTUNITY TO URGE SIMILAR RESTRAINT AND LENIENCY TOWARD AMERICAN MISSIONARIES SUCH AS OGLE. PRIMIN, WHO AWARE OF MY CONVERSATION DECEMBER TWO WITH VICE MINISTER LHO (SEOUL 8000), SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD TRY TO BE RESTRAINED, BUT BLUE HOUSE CLEARLY UNHAPPY WITH OGLE'S ALLEGED EFFORTS TO INCITE OPPOSITION.

9. COMMENT: PRIMIN COMMENTS BASICALLY CONSISTENT WITH PATTERN OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY EMBASSY HAS OBSERVED SINCE PRESIDENT FORD'S VISIT, AND REPORTS OF PRESIDENT PARK'S MORE RELAXED POSTURE SINCE THEN. PRIMIN'S COMMENTS REST ON ASSUMPTION THAT OPPOSITION AS WELL AS GOVERNMENT WILL EXERCISE RESTRAINT SUFFICIENT TO AVOID MAJOR CONFRONTATION.
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